

# **ST. COLUMBA'S SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCERS**

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2023**

### **MINUTES**

**Monday 13 March 2023**

**St. Columba's Church, Lower Hall, Pont Street, SW1X0BD**

#### **1 Apologies for absence**

There were apologies from Thelma-Jane Robb, Rona Black, Peter Knight, Lena Robinson, Sarah Shaw, Gilly Austin

#### **2 Minutes of the 2022 AGM**

The minutes were accepted by the meeting; proposed by Valerie Strachan and seconded by Lindsey Rousseau. There were no matters arising.

#### **3 Treasurer's Report**

Margaret Shaw circulated the accounts for 2022. There were no major queries. Acceptance of the accounts was proposed by Brian Pierson and seconded by Richard Clarke.

#### **4 Convenor's Report**

Willie thanked everyone for attending the AGM

The season so far has been positive with:

- Firm attendances
- Higher numbers, on average, compared with last season
- Four Band Nights which were well attended
  - Chris Oxtoby
  - Ken Martlew and Mollie Koenigsberger
  - Frank Reid (Burns Night) – Transport problems in London precluded some dancers from attending.
  - Ian Robertson (Combined Societies dance which St Columba's Dancers hosted)
- Still to come
  - Dave Hall (end of season dance)

A change to the Band Night format was made this season. Last season, there was an increasing trend of dancers leaving early to the detriment of the atmosphere and energy in the hall. Following discussions with the bands, the MCs and the committee, the view was taken that 10.30pm was perceived as late to finish a dance on a week night. Programmes were adjusted and the finish time brought forward to 10pm. This has made a big difference, with more dancers staying till the end and events becoming more atmospheric and enjoyable.

## Promotion

- The new website was introduced during the 2022 summer break
  - This has been well received. Dancers are happy about the ease of access to programmes, videos and cribs, be they minicribs or the diagrams provided by SCDDDB.
- Social media (Twitter and Facebook) has become a routine tool to keep dancers informed of events.
- Email is used to inform dancers of events and to provide dancers with minicribs.
- Flyers, for Band Nights, particularly via electronic media, are used more regularly.
- As before, events are advertised on an annual basis in *The Reel*.

## Finance

St Columba's Dancers is in a good financial position in that it is able to meet its obligations on an annual basis. There were some extraordinary costs last year associated with the development of the new website. The website was developed for us pro-bono, but there were costs associated with the website platform and web-hosting. The organisation benefitted from a 50% reduction in costs for the first 3 years but will be subject to a charge of ca. £400 in 2025. The remainder of the Valerie Twining legacy, £217, was used to cover the cost of the website in 2022.

## Hall Fees

St Columba's Dancers is not charged for the hall, but in recent years (except for the Covid period) an annual donation of £2,000 was made to the church. This is equivalent to about £67/ evening and is barely enough to cover the running costs. Had we to pay the going rate, it would cost around £500/ evening.

The committee would like to increase its donation to the church to ca. £2,500 per year. This appears like a large increase, but not so big when it is considered that there has not been an increase for some years.

## Bands

Band fees have increased little, since pre-Covid days. Signals are now emerging of increases and this has been factored into the Budget for next season.

## Consumables

The main cost for consumables is Burns Night. Group members have all experienced domestic inflation and St Columba's Dancers is no different. Members of the committee have been generously supplying the tea and biscuits. This is something that should not be assumed will continue into the future.

Given the inflationary situation and the need to cover costs, it is the committee's view that fees for next season should be:

Tea and biscuits: No change to the £2 donation already in place  
Should dancers wish to donate more, (weekly or seasonal) this would be welcome.  
Band Nights: increase the price from £11 to £13  
Burns night: Increase the price from £13 to £16

## Committee

St Columba's dancers could not function if it was not for the support of volunteers on a weekly basis. The committee, Thelma, Margaret, Lena, Helen, Steve, Sarah and Joan are a wonderful support and Willie thanked them for the hard work that they put in to making things happen.

## **MCs**

The MCs put considerable effort into thinking about programmes and managing dance evenings. It is not a case of coming up with a few dances; they deliberate about constructing balanced programmes and work to ensure that everything comes together seamlessly, which includes the introduction and teaching of the occasional new dance. Willie expressed admiration for what they do and thanked them for their contribution.

## **George Potts**

St Columba's Dancers was saddened to learn of the death of George Potts in March 2022. George's life, latterly, focused on the dancing community of which St Columba's featured prominently. George was a fine dancer in his day; it was his community outside work and he threw himself into it. He qualified as a dance teacher in 1983, taught dancing at Marlborough school, played an active part in the London branch of the Royal Scottish Dance Society, became a demonstration dancer and much more. He attended St Columba's Dancers but latterly, he largely confined himself to the kitchen providing whatever help was required.

George enjoyed projecting a dour persona. He revelled in it but, beneath that thin grumpy veneer he was warm, generous, kind, always ready with a back handed comment or even a compliment. On a good day you might even get a second cup of tea.

Willie ended by thanking the dancers for coming along each week and making it such a happy occasion.

## **5 Dance fees for Season 2023-24**

The meeting unanimously agreed with the fees proposed for season 2023-24.

## **6 Any Other Business**

Lindsey Rousseau and Helen Miller thanked Willie for the work he has put into the role of Convenor.